Draft Environmental Assessment

Milltown State Park Forest Health Improvement and Trail Development

October 2014

Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:

Montana State Parks (MSP), a division of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), proposes to conduct a forest management project to improve forest health conditions in the upland area surrounding the Milltown State Park Overlook. This project would include thinning trees 6-inches in diameter and smaller and removal of all beetle-infested trees, to benefit large ponderosa pine trees, larch and aspen. Approximately 20 acres would be treated inside the developed recreation site. Additionally, MSP proposes to construct an interpretive trail on the south side of the restored Clark Fork River floodplain river, which would connect to the Overlook area and a trail leading west from the Overlook to the Bandmann Flats area (for a total of approximately 2.5 miles of new trail). This construction would include interpretive/educational information highlighting natural and cultural history, ecology, and restoration. Trail development would include additional work such as installation of an informational kiosk, interpretive signage, and a vault latrine at the Overlook.

2. Agency authority for the proposed action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has the authority to develop outdoor recreational resources in the state per § 23-1-101, Montana Code Annotated (MCA): *"for the purpose of conserving the scenic, historic, archaeologic, scientific, and recreational resources of the state and providing their use and enjoyment, thereby contributing to the cultural, recreational, and economic life of the people and their health."*

Section 23-1-110, MCA and Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 12.2.433 guide public involvement and comment for the improvements at state parks, which this document provides. ARM 12.8.602 requires FWP to consider the wishes of the public, the capacity of the site for development, environmental impacts, long-range maintenance, protection of natural features and impacts on tourism as these elements relate to development or improvement to state parks. This document will illuminate the facets of the proposed project in relation to these rules.

The Clark Fork River floodplain is state property currently under the management authority of a partner agency, the Montana Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP). NRDP approved the floodplain trail project in its "Final Upper Clark Fork River Basin Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Plans[1]." Management authority for the floodplain will be ultimately transferred to Montana FWP.

[1] NRDP (Natural Resource Damage Program). 2012. Final Upper Clark Fork River Basin Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Restoration Plans. State of Montana, Natural Resource Dame Program, 1301 E Lockey, Helena, MT. https://doj.mt.gov/wp-content/uploads/Final-AT-Restoration-Plan-Combined.pdf Accessed 7 October 2014.

3. **Name of project:** Milltown State Park Forest Health Improvement and Trail Development

4. **Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):**
Montana State Parks
FWP, Region 2
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula MT 59804
(406) 542-5500

5. **Anticipated Schedule:**

Estimated Construction Commencement Date:
Forest Health Improvements: Fall 2014
Trail Development: Spring/Summer 2015

Estimated Completion Date:
Forest Health Improvements: Spring 2015
Trail Development: Summer/Fall 2015

Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 10%

6. **Location affected by proposed action (county; township, range and section):**
The project area is located near the unincorporated community of Milltown, adjacent to the Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers, approximately five miles east of Missoula along Interstate Highway 90 in Missoula County. Legal description: A tract of land in Sections 20 and 21 Township 13 North, Range 18 West (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Location map of Milltown State Park

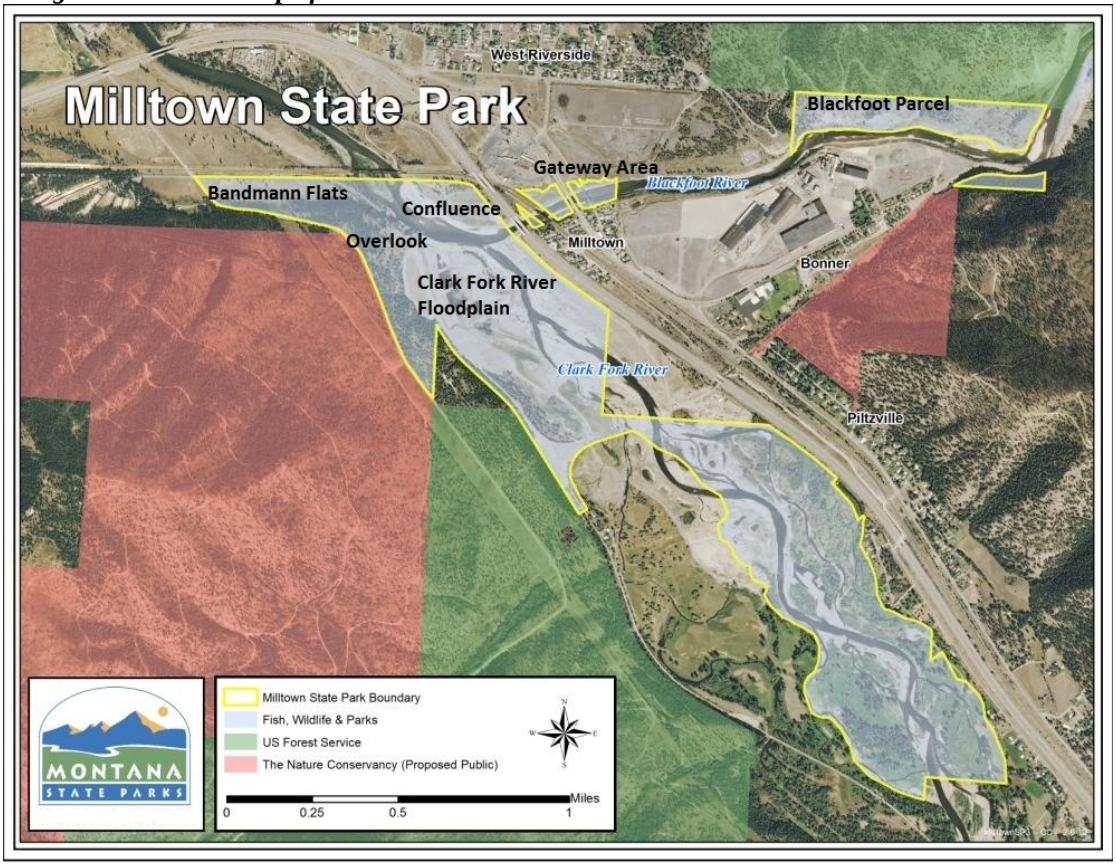

Figure 2. Milltown State Park and parcels

7. Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

	Acres		Acres
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	0.75
Residential	0		
Industrial	0	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	0
(b) Open Space/		Dry cropland	0
Woodlands/Recreation	20	Forestry	0
(c) Wetlands/Riparian		Rangeland	0
Areas	0	Other	0

8. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits: permits will be filed at least 2 weeks prior to project start.

Agency Name	Permits
Missoula County Health Dept.	Burning permit
MT Dept. of Environmental Quality	Air quality permit (burning)

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Forest Project:	
Montana State Parks (NRDP O&M Funds)	$12,000
Montana Dept. Natural Resources and Conservation	$12,000
Trail Project:	
Montana Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP)	$50,000

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
NRDP	Funding/oversight
Montana Dept. Natural Resources and Conservation	Funding/oversight
Missoula County	Permitting

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:

Milltown State Park is a 535-acre park site located at the confluence of the Blackfoot and Clark Fork Rivers (Figure 2). The creation of the park is part of the final redevelopment phase of a larger Superfund cleanup effort, which involved the removal of a dam at the confluence of the two rivers and reconstruction of the Clark Fork River channel and floodplain. Once open, the park will offer river access and serve as a hub for connecting trails to adjacent communities and trail networks leading east to Turah and west to Missoula. In addition, the park has a rich cultural and natural history, which presents many educational and interpretive opportunities.

Currently, the Overlook area (constructed in 2011) is the primary portion of the park that is open to the public, and visitation to the site has increased steadily. The Overlook area includes a small parking area, information kiosk and a short paved trail that leads to a fenced overlook with picnic tables, benches and interpretive displays.

The Clark Fork River floodplain in the Milltown area has been the focus of NRDP-led river restoration efforts for the past several years. Those efforts have now been completed, and while monitoring and maintenance will continue, the floodplain is set to open for public access in July of 2015.

The proposed forest health improvement and trail development would enhance public safety, forest aesthetics, and wildlife habitat and increase recreational opportunities for visitors to the park.

Forest Health Improvements

The proposed forest health project would take place on up to 20 acres within the 50-acre Overlook project area during late fall and early winter of 2014/15 (Figure 3). The site is densely overstocked with small diameter Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine; however, numerous prominent *legacy* trees (large century-plus aged ponderosa pines) and several dozen well-formed mature pines exist. Aspen, Rocky Mountain juniper and western larch are also present with an understory of snowberry, Oregon grape and ninebark.

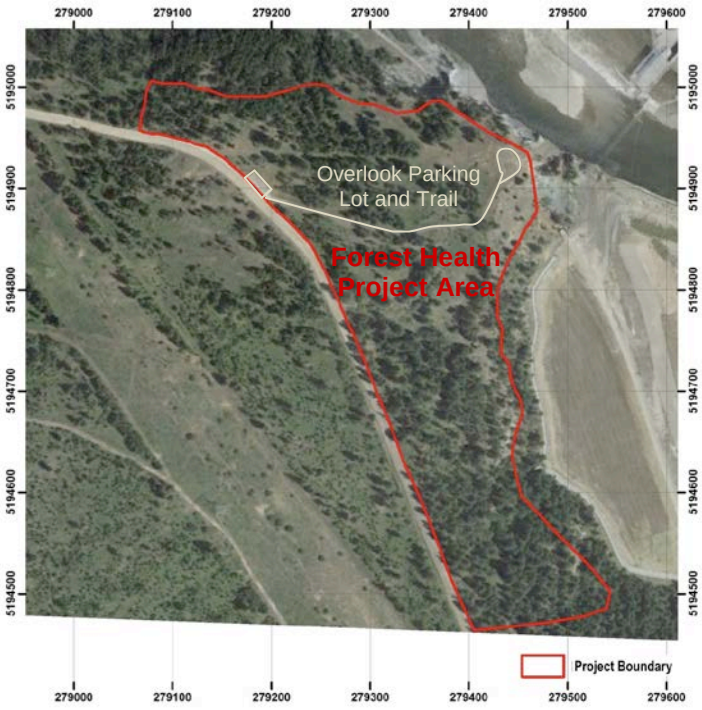

Figure 3. Proposed Forest Health Project Area at the Milltown State Park Overlook

In November of 2012, staff from Montana State Parks and DNRC conducted an assessment of forest conditions at Milltown State Park and found multiple infestations of bark beetles with patches of dead and dying pines. To address these conditions, Montana State Parks applied for and was awarded $12,000 in grant funds from the Western Bark Beetle Prevention, Suppression, and Restoration Grant Program, managed by the DNRC. For the proposed project Montana State Parks would provide a $12,000 grant match of operational costs and staff time, bringing the total project cost to $24,000. Much of the forest thinning and slash treatment work would be contracted out to a private forestry business.

The primary focus of the project would be to improve overall forest health conditions, and reduce bark beetle infestation. The prescribed treatment would include the removal of beetle infested pines, thinning of trees less than 6 inches in diameter that are growing under large mature trees, and the removal of weak, diseased or dying trees to improve stand health. All wood materials from the project would be removed from the site, or chipped and/or burned.

With aesthetics being among park priorities, the project would require an approach focused on minimal ground disturbance and detailed clean up. Site rehabilitation and weed control efforts would take place as part of the proposed project as well as ongoing general park management. Clusters of denser trees would be retained in some locations to provide cover and decrease sight distances for wildlife, and habitat trees (snags) for cavity nesting wildlife would be left in areas off-trail and away from facilities.

Trail Development

Trails are a key component of the vision for Milltown State Park and there is hope that eventually the park will serve as a hub to connect existing trail systems between local communities. Within the park, about seven miles of potential trail routes have been identified; the current proposal is for approximately 2.5 miles of new trail, with an estimated 90-acre footprint. Improvements would establish trails on the Clark Fork River's southern floodplain, connect the floodplain to the Overlook, and provide a connection from the Overlook westward to Bandmann Flats (Figures 4 and 5).

With NRDP funding from its "Final Upper Clark Fork Basin Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Plan, December 2012," MSP proposes to establish a set of interpretive trail loops through the Clark Fork River floodplain, which would connect to the old Milwaukee railroad grade and connect the floodplain to the upland portion of the park at the Overlook. An additional trail connection would extend west from the Overlook to the Bandmann Flats area. The trails would offer both recreational access and interpretation of the area's natural and cultural history, river ecology and restoration. Interpretive content would be delivered through means such as panels, exhibits, brochures and digital content (for electronic devices such as phones and tablets). Installation of panels, exhibits, etc. would occur above the 100-year floodplain.

The floodplain trail would be natural surface and approximately 48-inches wide, with trail alignments following natural high points above the bankfull elevation within the floodplain. The floodplain trail would not include many "hardscape" (paved) features, as it is anticipated that the trail could be flooded periodically during spring runoff. Above the 100-year floodplain, the trail would be approximately 60-inches wide and composed of a hard-packed surface.

The trail connecting the floodplain to upland areas and the Overlook would follow an existing old logging-skid trail uphill from the floodplain and connect to the Overlook area via a new trail section that partially follows existing user-created pathways. From the Overlook Trail, another section would eventually continue to the west to connect to Bandmann Flats. These trails would be approximately 24-to-30-inches wide with a natural surface. Some basic trail structures, such as stair steps, retaining features or water-bars, could be constructed from materials gathered on-site.

Trail improvements would likely be conducted by Montana Conservation Corps crews, MSP staff, and volunteers. Installation of other minor park developments such as informational kiosks, interpretive signage, and a vault latrine would be conducted by MSP staff and volunteers.

Figure 4. Proposed floodplain trail alignment and connection to the Milltown Overlook.

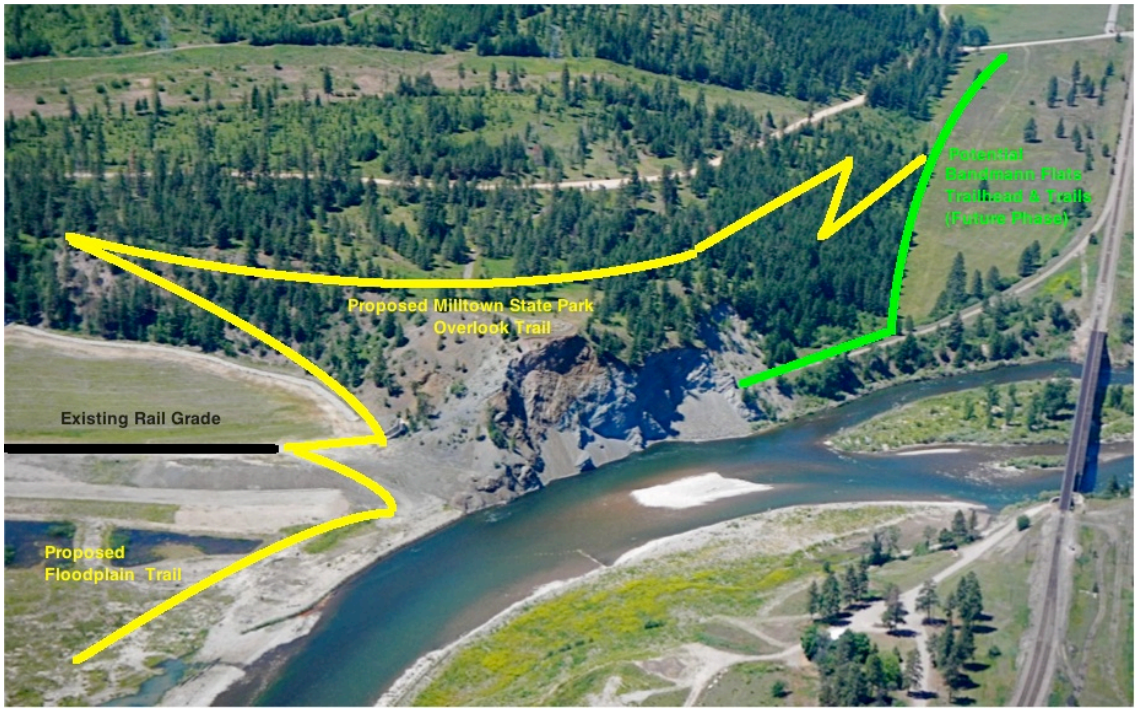

Figure 5. Proposed trails on the Clark Fork floodplain, Milltown Overlook and Bandmann Flats

10. Description and analysis of alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action
Montana State Parks would not implement the proposed forest health and trail improvement projects.

As a result, stands of trees would remain densely overstocked and forest health benefits would not be realized. Beetle infestations could continue and legacy trees would continue to be stressed by overstocked stands and increasing susceptibility to beetle attack. Dead trees would continue to deteriorate and fall, posing safety hazards to power lines, recreationists, adjacent landowners, and site improvements, as well as adding to hazardous fuels.

Establishment of trails and other park improvements such as kiosks, interpretive signage and a vault latrine at the Overlook area would not take place. Milltown State Park would provide fewer established trail offerings, struggle to meet public demand for trail opportunities, and be increasingly challenged to accommodate public recreation in concert with protecting the newly restored natural environment from impacts associated with recreational use. Educational potential afforded by the floodplain interpretive trail would also go unrealized.

Alternative B (Preferred): Implementation of Forest Health Improvement and Trail Development
Implementing the proposed forest health and recreational improvements would have positive ecological and social benefits. Forest health and aesthetics, visitor satisfaction and safety as well as wildlife habitat would all be improved. With removal of the beetle-infested trees, various hazards associated with deadfall and fire would be reduced, and thinning would reduce competition between trees while allowing increased vigor and resistance to pests

Establishing trails would provide enhanced public access to the park, while maintaining protection of the restored natural environment. Interpretive components of trail establishment would provide both formal and informal educational benefits.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

1. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Actions including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		Yes	1b.
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:		X				

1b. Short-term effects caused by the use of mechanical equipment to harvest and transport trees to landings may lead to some soil compaction. Ground disturbance would be mitigated by seasonal operating restrictions (i.e., fall/winter conditions) by working with mechanical equipment on frozen ground when possible. In addition, areas of exposed soils would be seeded with a native grass seed mix. Trail design and construction would be geared toward minimizing long-term soil impacts and short-term impacts would be addressed through post construction site reclamation efforts such as landscaping and seeding.

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X		yes	2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X		yes	2b.
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?			X		yes	2c.
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)			X		yes	2e.
f. Other:		X				

2a & b. Machinery used during the timber removal project would create noise and emissions. This project would be done in the late fall or winter when recreational use is minimal to lessen impacts to recreationists. In addition, care would be taken to limit working hours to minimize disturbance to adjacent neighbors. All generated noise and emissions would be temporary. Burning of slash could result in temporary effects on air quality and create smoke that may impact adjacent neighbors and recreationists. Burning would occur during periods when conditions are suitable for good air dispersion. All applicable air shed or burning permits would be acquired before any burning takes place. Trail construction will be done with hand tools and chainsaws, and all generated noise and emissions would be minimal and temporary.

2c. A secondary effect of conducting a thinning or harvesting project is the opening of the canopy which could lead to increases in ambient air temperature and increased wind movement. Due to the limited amount of acres involved in this project, the effect of thinning on temperature and air movement is considered minor.

2e. All applicable air shed or burning permits would be acquired before any burning takes place**.**

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		Yes	3b.
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)			X		Yes	3i.
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		X				
n. Other:		X				

3b. Where present on hillsides, trails could have a minimal effect on the course of drainage during large scale precipitation events. Trail layout would be done in accordance with best management practices to minimize negative impacts.

3i. Some trail would be located in the 100-year floodplain but would not likely to have negative impacts. Trail design and construction would be compatible with the natural processes of an active floodplain and comprise minimal hardscape features. NRDP was consulted on the layout of the trails. Establishment of floodplain trails could have the positive effect of directing recreationists to locations on the floodplain most suitable for trail uses as opposed to dispersed public access and impacts across the floodplain.

4. VEGETATION **Will the proposed action result in?**	**IMPACT ∗**					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		Yes	4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X		Yes	4b.
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4e.
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:		X				

4a & b. The effect of this project on the changes in diversity, productivity, and abundance of plant species is considered positive. The effects of the forest health project would improve the health and vigor of the overall stand, increase the potential for regeneration, and reduce potential catastrophic fire risk through fuel reduction. Development of park facilities and infrastructure may lessen plant productivity and abundance in the immediate areas of trail development and would be addressed through post construction site reclamation efforts such as landscaping and seeding. Overall plant diversity would likely not be affected.

4e. While weeds currently exist in the project areas, noxious weeds could develop in disturbed soils related to the project. Disturbed soils from the forest health project would be reseeded where practical. Park staff and contracted herbicide applicators would monitor these sites for weeds and take measures to address weed control through an integrated management approach.

**** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE** **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ∗**					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X			5b.
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X			5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				

f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?			X		Yes	5f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		X				
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		X				
j. Other:		X				

5b & c. With the change in tree density, there may be some localized changes to the types or diversity of bird species and/or nongame species in the forest health project area. Effect on the overall bird types or densities in the area would be minimal. Groups of snag trees have been designated to be retained for wildlife purposes throughout the entire project area. Thinning operations during fall/winter will avoid disturbance or mortality of nesting songbirds. Human disturbance from human use of the trail will cause a minor decrease of foraging or nesting activity in the vicinity of the trail for some bird species. Some bird species will benefit over the long-term from increased growth of the remaining trees, especially aspen.

5f. Bald eagles nest near Milltown State Park and forage along the river. Bald and golden eagles are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. This act prohibits disturbance of nesting eagles, and requires protection of nest sites. FWP biologists and state park staff are monitoring a pair of bald eagles that may be attempting to establish a nest site within half a mile of the trail between the Overlook and the floodplain. If an active nest is discovered, appropriate mitigation measures will be implemented to prevent disturbance to the nest during trail construction and tree thinning. Once these projects are completed, day use by the public in the area is not expected to disturb the eagles during subsequent nesting years.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X			6a.
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?			X			6b.
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:						

6a&b Machinery used during the timber removal and trail project would create some noise and emissions. This project would be done in the late fall or winter when visitation is at its lowest to lessen disturbance. Workers would be exposed to intermittent noise levels that would require use of hearing protection. In addition, care would be taken to limit working hours to minimize disturbance to adjacent neighbors living within a quarter mile of the work site.

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other:		X				

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		Yes	8a.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?			X		Yes	8b.
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X		Yes	8c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		X				
e. Compliance with existing land policies for land use, transportation, and open space?		X				
g. Other:		X				

8a. The use of heavy equipment during forest improvement and trail construction activities may result in a slight risk of contamination from petroleum. Best management practices would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize these risks. The application of herbicides to manage noxious weeds would be applied according to the proper guidelines.

8b. Montana State Parks works closely with Missoula County emergency responders and would develop an Emergency Access Plan in conjunction with the park opening.

8c. Appropriate public safety measures such as the establishment of work zones and proper public notification would be involved for all aspects of the project. These measures in addition to following best management practices for the project would minimize potential for human health and safety hazards.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X			9e.
f. Other:		X				

9e. A slight, temporary increase in industrial/commercial traffic could be associated with the forest improvement and trail constructions project. Equipment and trucks would be active in the area for a few weeks and would use Deer Creek Road to access the forest thinning project area. The project would occur during the lowest period of visitation. Additionally, appropriate traffic and hazard signing would be used to minimize conflict. Trail construction, as part of the overall park development, will likely lead to modest increases in visitation.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:			X			10a.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources		X				
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.			X			10f.
g. Other:		X				

10a. Trail development at Milltown State Park would require additional attention and maintenance resulting from public recreation. These requirements would be covered with existing staff and parks budgets. Additionally, Montana State Parks would continue to coordinate with Missoula County partners, particularly the County Commissioners, Sheriff's Office and Rural Fire Department to address any concerns that might emerge relative to this project.

10f. Future maintenance costs for the new trails and for ongoing weed management in the project areas would be covered under the existing park operations and maintenance budget.

** 11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X		Yes	11a.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?			X		Yes	11b.
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X		Yes	11c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		X				
e. Other:		X				

11a & b There could be temporary effects to visual quality during the course of timber harvesting operations and timber harvest would alter the current look. However, following the project, thinning would likely enhance vistas from the Overlook area and improve scenery and aesthetics. Slash piles would be burned in a timely fashion to increase visual quality.

11c. New trail development would enhance the quantity and quality of tourism and recreational opportunities.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		X				12d.
e. Other:		X				12.e

12d. In accordance with the Montana Antiquities Act (22-3-421 to 22-3-442) and with FWP ARM rules (12.8.501 to 12.8.10), a heritage resource survey will be conducted prior to project development to identify possible historic and archaeological sites. Impacts to these sites, if identified, would be taken into consideration as part of project planning and would be avoided, if possible. If historic or cultural resources are identified during trail development, constructions would stop until SHPO or Montana State Parks cultural resources specialist could be involved in helping determine if the project should be modified to avoid resource damage, or if some damage is acceptable and cannot be avoided in accordance with § 22-3-430 MCA, in which mitigation measures would be proposed.

12e. New trailside interpretation would enhance recreational/educational opportunities through discussion of the park's cultural and natural history.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE **Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				13a.
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		X				
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				

13a. Overall impacts from the proposed project are expected to be beneficial in nature.

2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency: See section 8(a) for identification of other agencies and their permitting responsibilities. The contract forester hired for the forest thinning component would be hired through a Request for Proposal process. The forester would abide by terms and design conditions defined in the project contract which would be overseen by MSP.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed Forest Health and Trail Improvement Project is not expected to have negative cumulative impacts on the physical and/or human environments. The minor impacts identified in the previous sections are most likely to occur in relation to the work/construction phase of the project. There are no lasting negative effects anticipated in relation to this project. The natural environment would continue to provide habitat to the transient and permanent wildlife and aquatic species.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Two legal notices in each of these papers: *Missoulian* and *Independent Record*
- One statewide press release;
- Public notice on the Montana State Parks webpage *www.stateparks.mt.gov*
- A copy of the EA will be posted on Parks' webpage (under "Public Notices") along with the opportunity to submit comment via that webpage.
- A copy of the EA will be placed at Region 2 FWP Headquarters for review during the comment period.

Copies of this environmental assessment or notice of its availability will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts, many of which can be mitigated, or are beneficial in nature.

2. Duration of comment period, if any.

The public comment period will extend for thirty (30) days following the publication of the second legal notice in area newspapers. Written comments must be received by FWP not later than 5:00 p.m. on _____ and can be mailed to the address below:

FWP Region 2 Office
ATTN: Milltown EA
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59808

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)? No
If an EIS is not required, explain <u>why</u> the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

Based on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment under MEPA, this environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts from the proposed action; therefore an EIS is not necessary and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis in determining the significance of impacts.

2. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Michael Kustudia
Milltown State Park Manager
FWP Region 2 Office
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59808

3. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Parks Division
- Fisheries Division
- Wildlife Division
- Design & Construction Bureau
- Legal Unit

Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism

APPENDICES

A. Project Qualification Checklist
B. Tourism Report
C. Threatened and Endangered Species List

APPENDIX A
23-1-110 MCA
PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date: September 30, 2014 **Person Reviewing:** Michael Kustudia

Project Location: Milltown State Park

Description of Proposed Work: Forest Health Thinning and Trail Construction

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under 23-1-110 rules. (Please check ☐ all that apply and comment as necessary.)

[X] A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: *Yes, a trail will be built on portions of the Clark Fork River floodplain.*

[ ] B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments*:* N/A

[ ] C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments*:*

[ ] D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments:

[ ] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments*:* N/A

[ ] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments*:* N/A

[ ] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments*:*

[ ] H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments*:* N/A

[ ] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments*:* N/A

[ ] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments*:* N/A

If any of the above are checked, 23-1-110 MCA rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.

APPENDIX B

TOURISM REPORT

MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Carol Crockett, Grants Manager
Montana Office of Tourism-Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Milltown State Park Forest Health and Trail Improvements

Project Description: This two-part project proposes forest health and trail enhancements to Milltown State Park on the south side of the Clark Fork River. Montana State Parks proposes to thin up to 22 acres on the Milltown Bluff to improve forest conditions, visitor safety, wildlife habitat and park aesthetics. MSP also proposes to expand the trail network with approximately 1.5 miles of new trail from the Overlook to an interpretive trail loop through the Clark Fork River floodplain. The trail from the overlook passes through the area proposed for thinning. Additionally, visitor amenities such as interpretive exhibits, information kiosks and vault latrines would be installed along the overlook and floodplain trails.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
   NO **YES** If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, this project has the potential to positively impact the tourism and recreation industry economy if properly maintained. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
   NO **YES** If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to improve quality and quantity of tourism and recreational opportunities if properly maintained. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

Signature Carol Crockett, Grants Manager Date Sept 17, 2014

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APPENDIX C

Montana Species of Concern and Threatened/Endangered Species observed or expected to occur in the proposed project area.

Common name ***Species***	**Status***	**Habitat**	**Status in Vicinity of Parcels**
<u>Species of Concern</u>			
Bull Trout *Salvelinus confluentus*	Threatened, SOC, Tier 1	Mountain streams, rivers, and lakes	Uses the Blackfoot River and Clark Fork River as a migratory corridor.
Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*)	Sensitive, SOC, Tier 1	Coldwater streams	Uses the Blackfoot River and Clark Fork River as a migratory corridor.
Canada Lynx *(Lynx Canadensis)*	Threatened, SOC Tier 1	Subalpine conifer forests	The area has low quality lynx habitat.
Fisher (*Martes pennant*)	SOC, Tier 2	Mixed conifer forest	The area has low quality fisher habitat.
Hoary Bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*)	SOC, Tier 2	Conifer and riparian forests	Suitable habitat, no surveys have been done to document presence/absence.
Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*)	SOC	Conifer and riparian forests, caves and rocky outcrops	Suitable habitat, no surveys have been done in this area to document presence/absence.
Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*)	SOC, Tier 2	Conifer forests	The area has low quality wolverine habitat. Potential movement area, not verified.
Bald Eagle *(Haliaeetus leucocephalus)*	Delisted, SOC, Tier 1	Riparian forests	Nest sites at east Missoula and upper end of former Milltown Reservoir.
Clark's Nutcracker *(Nucifraga Columbiana)*	SOC, Tier 3	Conifer forests	Birds present & probably use all of the parcels.
Flammulated Owl *(Otus flammeolus)*	SOC, Tier 1	Low-mid elevation conifer forests with large trees	The Milltown Bluff provides the best habitat for this species, but lacks snags large enough to provide suitable nest sites. Verified nesting on ridges to the west and north of Milltown.
Great Blue Heron *(Ardea Herodias)*	SOC, Tier 3	Riparian woodlands	Rookery located at the upper end of the former Milltown Reservoir near the old railroad bed. Uses the Clark Fork River floodplain for foraging.
Northern Goshawk *(Accipiter gentilis)*	SOC, Tier 2	Mixed conifer forests	Foraging habitat on the Bluff.
Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*)	SOC, Tier 2	Moist conifer forests and riparian bottoms with large trees	Best habitat on the floodplain and bluff. The area generally lacks snags large enough for nesting.
Peregrine Falcon (*Falco pereginus*)	Delisted, SOC, Tier 2	Cliffs, forages over riparian, wetland habitats	Bonner nest site is located just off the NE corner of FWP Milltown Park property along the Blackfoot River. The trail construction and thinning projects will not impact this nesting pair.
Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*)	SOC, Tier 2-3	Riparian forests, shrubby habitats	Documented using riparian shrub habitat in the Milltown Reservoir area.
Pacific Wren (*Troglodytes pacificus*)	SOC, Tier 2	Moist conifer forests	Suitable habitat in area, not verified.
Western Skink	SOC, Tier 2	Rock outcrops	Suitable habitat, not verified.

Common name ***Species***	**Status***	**Habitat**	**Status in Vicinity of Parcels**
(*Eumeces skiltonianus*)			
Western Toad (*Bufo boreas*)	SOC, Tier 2	Wetlands, lakes, floodplain pools	Verified in the Turah area; may use uplands adjacent to Clark Fork and Blackfoot rivers.
A. Millipede (*Adrityla cucullata*)	SOC	Dry mixed conifer forest clearings	Unknown
A. Millipede (Austrotyla montani)	SOC	Mixed conifer forests	Unknown
A. Millipede (*Corypus cochlearis*)	SOC	Mixed conifer forests	Unknown
<u>Potential Species of Concern</u>			
Barrow's Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*)	PSOC, Tier 3	Wetlands	Documented to occur in the area during migration.
Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*)	PSOC, Tier 2	Rivers and riparian wetlands	Documented to occur in the area during migration. Potential breeding habitat in oxbow wetlands along the Clark Fork River upstream of the former dam site.
An Ice Crawler (*Grylloblatta campodeiformis*)	PSOC		Unknown due to its nocturnal habits and activity at temperatures just above freezing.

*Tier 1 status identifies those species in greatest conservation need.